

APPENDIX TWO: The Circle of Grace Growth Strategy

CIRCLE OF GRACE GROWTH STRATEGY

New churches sometimes lose their evangelistic focus through growing too rapidly. Their discipleship systems become overwhelmed by an influx of new and/or immature Christians. In order to remain focused on making disciples in a period of rapid growth, we have worked out the following growth strategy with our consultant to function as a supportive foundation to numeric growth. **It is important that we have a structure in place so that if rapid growth happens, no confusion will develop.**

1. THE FIRST CIRCLE OF LEADERSHIP: The Hub provides the first circle of leadership.

2. THE SECOND CIRCLE OF LEADERSHIP: The Clock.



The goal of the Hub is to develop *twelve circles of grace*. This is called *building the clock*. Each *circle of grace* has at least one *spiritual parent* functioning as group leader and two *disciples* cooperating as a JUMP group. The goal of each *circle of grace* is to produce multiple new JUMP groups lead by the former *disciples*. **The clock is built** when there are 12 JUMP groups operating to open *circles of grace*; this is a healthy leadership core group of 36 *disciples* and *spiritual parents*. Each *spiritual parent* serves as a

leader in the Hub at the center of the Clock.

3. **Circle reports:** Attendance and needs for prayer are reported each week by the *spiritual parent* to the administrator who informs the pastor. This church will be internet based, linking and resourcing leaders through a web site and email. The **clock is filled** when an average of 120 persons participate regularly each week in *circles of grace*.

4. **Worship:** the fellowship is welcome to open services of worship for the public once the clock is built and filled. The 120 persons function as a *base congregation* as in Acts 1.¹ Worship is planned in the Hub and may at first be monthly or weekly. Service responsibilities rotate among the circles that make up the clock. Worship is for seekers, not insiders. *Disciples* and *spiritual parents* can wear name tags at worship to identify them as persons ready to answer questions or help with prayer or special needs; this will help form relationships where they can invite worship attenders to participate in *circles of grace* and JUMP groups.

¹A *base congregation* is technically the 120 disciples praying in the Upper Room in Acts; they are a base congregation of 120 *spiritual parents* who have been fully trained by Jesus over three years to rapidly mature the 3000 converted on the day of Pentecost. This idea is from Bill Beckham's *The Second Reformation*.

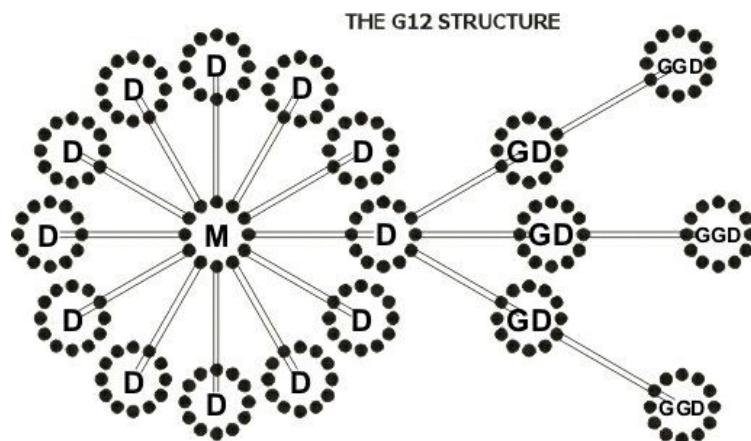
5. THE THIRD and FOURTH CIRCLE OF LEADERSHIP: The Wagon Wheel.



If it is God’s will and the fellowship is faithful to the Great Commission, the fellowship will continue to grow. How can this growth be organized in an orderly manner? Here is one answer.

The clock is a congregation of 12 circles of 12 or 144 participants. The next stage of growth resembles a wagon wheel with four concentric circles. **The Hub** remains the core decision making body with twelve leaders, the pastor and an administrator. Surrounding the hub are the twelve original mother circles that built the clock and are the **Second Circle**. JUMP groups emerging from each mother circle form the **Third Circle** that consists of the spokes of the wagon wheel. As JUMP groups form *circles of grace* in the rim they fill up the **Fourth Circle** of the Wagon Wheel. The nature of the original or mother circles in the second circle begins to change; they now become groups of group leaders which are called D-Groups.² D-groups (2nd circle) are made up of up to 12 *spiritual parents* each leading a JUMP group (3rd circle/spokes) that leads a *circle of grace* (4th circle/rim). The goal of each D-group is to spin off 12 JUMP groups that will start 12 *circles of grace* for that section of the wheel. Sections of the wheel are also called “slices of pie” or “tribes.” Each D-group is led by a spiritual grandparent or “tribal leader” who also serves with the Hub. Each “slice of the pie” consists of a leadership group of 12 (D-Group), 12 JUMP groups (the spoke) connected to 12 *circles of grace* on the rim.

A four circle wagon wheel structure that is filled completely will consist of 12 groups of 12 leaders each leading 12 small groups on the rim. $12 \times 12 = 144$ leaders of groups \times 12 participants = 1728. Here is an illustration that may help our understanding:



In this image, generations of groups are labeled as M for Mother, D for Daughter, G for Grand-daughter and GGD for Great-Grand-daughter. *The lines show the leader of daughter groups participating as members in the parent group for supervision and leadership development.*

In our terminology:
 M = the Hub.
 D = the D-group.

One D-group is building circles on the rim; in our structure there would

be six *circles of grace* on the rim.

It is important that we have a structure in place so that if rapid growth happens, no confusion will develop.

²Some authors call them G12 groups.

6. Tribes have kinship. Each tribe flows out of the leadership of one *spiritual grandparent* who opens a *circle of grace* to welcome people into faith. All of the people who enter the fellowship through that original *circle of grace* will tend to share common characteristics. A tribe will grow faster if it seeks out people with whom it has a comfortable kinship. It is an *extended spiritual family* headed by one or more spiritual grandparents.

Each tribe, however, will differ from the others in the fellowship; as the tribe grows, these unique differences will become more and more apparent. As *disciples* become *spiritual parents* who make *disciples*, each tribe will have a natural network of leadership develop that links all members together in relationships of trust and respect. People will be used to working together within their tribe. As time goes on, more and more ministry will be done by tribes working in their communities. Often, the Hub will rotate responsibility for planning and serving in worship among the various tribes.

7. Meeting Summary. Leaders are expected to participate in:

Weekly:	<i>Circle of grace</i>	+ Jump group	= 2+ meetings a week.
Monthly:	Gathering (fellowship & worship)	+ Porch (equipping)	= 2+ meetings a month.

The Hub normally would meet monthly. The Hub plans the monthly meetings.

The Hub may decide to hold Porch meetings for JUMP groups more or less often than monthly.

When worship begins, it may meet monthly at first, then more often.

As tribes grow, they may organize mini-Gatherings and mini-Porch meetings.

When tribes form, the D-group meeting for spiritual parents adds another meeting.

Normally these are weekly but it is up to the discretion of the *spiritual grandparent*. At first these are very small.

8. Church planting. When a tribe has filled their “piece of the pie” with 12 groups and more than 120 regular participants, they have the option of becoming a new church plant.

Usually this *extended spiritual family* will develop because someone within this tribe has the gifts and a calling to serve as the pastor of the tribe and because God has the desire to begin a new church. (The person called to become a pastor may or may not be the original *spiritual grandparent* of the tribe.) Just as parents give birth to children, healthy families give birth to new families as children grow up to be parents. In the same way, healthy churches give birth to new church families. We would not wish to in any way inhibit God from doing this through the Circle of Grace Fellowship; it is not our goal to become a megachurch but rather to be a faithful church of whatever size God desires us to be. We are intentionally an “*ever widening circle of grace.*” The choice to become a daughter church, however, is entirely up to the leadership of the tribe.

This is what would happen if the tribal leadership chooses to become a new church. With more than 120 committed participants, they are ready to be a *base congregation* of Acts 1. The *piece of the pie* becomes a new church simply by organizing their own worship service. The D-group leader becomes the new pastor, the D-group becomes the new Hub, and the church begins with the second circle, the clock, already built and filled with 12 *circles of grace*. They already

know how to fill the third and fourth circles and can easily do it again. This structure for church planting that combines aspects of the G12 cell church with Bill Beckham's concept of the *base congregation* is called the G12-BC. As tribes fill up, the mother G12-BC church releases them to continue their ministry as a new church and form their own G12-BC.

9. Hub Retirement. We are all responsible to fulfill God's will for our lives. Tribal leadership and service within the hub is not necessarily a life-long duty. As a fellowship grows, service in the Hub can become more demanding. When a leader in the Hub feels called to simpler ministry within our body of Christ, God will have prepared a leader in that person's tribe to take their place in the Hub. Usually this person is obvious because they are already doing most of the leadership work within the tribe. (This may not be obvious to the Hub tribal leader.)

Hub leadership is never granted because of seminary education or "superstar" gifts in worship, teaching, etc., but because of the trust and respect earned in relationships within the tribe. We are a fellowship, not a television show. Hub leaders focus on the care of spiritual children and literally connect their people together relationally (Mark 9:33-35; Luke 22:24-27). For this reason, Hub replacements normally come out of the extended spiritual family of the leader being replaced. Hub leadership is based on the practice of the principles of Matthew 18. If a Hub leader becomes relationally damaging to their extended spiritual family, Hub leaders would evaluate using the principles of Matthew 18 and then practice Matthew 18:15-17.

The Hub recognizes that conflict between fallible human beings is inevitable. The Hub is aware that those who bring conflict and accusations, based on 1 Corinthians 3:1-5, do so out of spiritually immature motives; raising anxiety and dividing the fellowship into quarreling factions is a sin of the accuser, not the accused. These accusers normally present themselves as victims demanding justice. With the understanding that triangling and other dysfunctional family practices are not to be supported,³ Hub leadership will prayerfully apply the principles of Acts 6:1-7 when there are complaints.

Growing congregations are always spiritually attacked through church conflict. The purpose of conflict is to push the congregation back into a religious comfort zone of not making disciples and not transforming lives.

³For an understanding of dysfunctional family practices within congregations, see books by Edwin Friedman and Peter Steinke.